



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Contact: John Lundberg (360) 586-8459

Linda Waring (360) 902-1815

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, Washington 98504-2560

## Sudden oak death confirmed at a south King County nursery

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture (WSDA) announced today that a serious plant disease known as sudden oak death has been confirmed in four rhododendrons at Furney's Nursery in south King County. All four plants were shipped to the nursery from its Portland-area affiliate, where the disease was detected last month. Sudden oak death attacks 20 types of plants that are common to the Pacific Northwest.

This is the first time sudden oak death has been found in Washington. Of 261 plant samples taken at the nursery, four tested positive. To prevent the disease from moving beyond the nursery, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has ordered the nursery to:

- Hold all plants susceptible to sudden oak death until WSDA or APHIS inspects them. Inspectors are on site today.
- Destroy all the plants within the group where the four rhododendrons were located, plus all susceptible plants within two meters of the group.
- Hold all susceptible plants located within 10 meters of the group for 90 days. During that time, WSDA will regularly inspect the plants for signs of disease. If no signs are found, they will be released for sale.

Officials from WSDA, APHIS and the Oregon Department of Agriculture have been working since mid-May to determine if any infected plant material was shipped from the Oregon nursery into Washington. At this time, they believe six nursery and landscape businesses received plants in the last seven months. All suspect plant material at Furney's Nursery has been isolated for the last two weeks, pending the test results. WSDA is in the process of tracking and testing suspect plant material at the other businesses.

Sudden oak death is caused by a fungus-like organism and was first identified several years ago in Europe and California. It is particularly deadly to species of red oak and tanoak found in California and Oregon, however, native Washington oaks appear to be resistant to the disease. Other plants common to the Pacific Northwest, such as Douglas fir, huckleberry, big leaf maple and rhododendron, are susceptible, but are not likely to die. Symptoms of the disease differ from plant to plant, and may include leaf spots, needle and tip blight, and shoot tip dieback.

"Other plant pathogens cause similar symptoms," says Art Wagner, a plant pathologist at WSDA. "The only way to distinguish sudden oak death from other diseases is through laboratory analysis. We've surveyed for the presence of

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sudden oak death in Washington since 2001, and we have no evidence at this time to indicate the disease is widespread.” For information about sudden oak death, visit the WSDA Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov>.

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